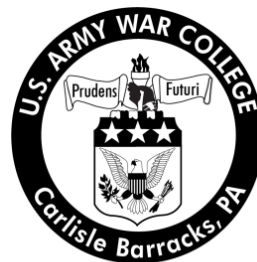


Strategy Research Project

The Appropriate Army Organization to Conduct Security Force Assistance

by

Colonel John S. Prairie
United States Army



United States Army War College
Class of 2012

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE APPROPRIATE ARMY ORGANIZATION TO CONDUCT
SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE**

by

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ABSTRACT

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During the past decade combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have caused shifts in National Security priorities. Senior leaders have identified the strategic requirement to build viable partner forces capable of maintaining internal stability, defending against external threats, and assisting in the fight against violent global extremists. The Army has translated this strategy into the security force assistance (SFA) doctrine. However, since the creation of SFA, there has been debate as to which organization is best suited to train, advise, and assist foreign security forces (FSF). In the past, Special Operations Forces (SOF) conducting foreign internal defense (FID) were the primary force of choice to accomplish this mission set. Recently this paradigm has shifted. Conventional forces have been reorganized and augmented allowing them to take the lead role in training both Iraqi and Afghan security forces. This project will define the overall strategic connection to SFA, analyze the capabilities of these two military organizations by evaluating their advantages and disadvantages, and finally recommend a feasible means to attain the national end state.

THE APPROPRIATE ARMY ORGANIZATION TO CONDUCT SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE

Building the defense capacity of allies and partners and ensuring that the U.S. Armed Forces are able to effectively train and operate with foreign militaries is a high-priority mission.

—Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review, February 2010¹

During the past decade combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have caused shifts in National Security priorities. Senior leaders have identified the strategic requirement to build viable partner forces capable of maintaining internal stability, defending against external threats, and assisting in the fight against violent global extremists.² The Army has translated this strategy into SFA doctrine. However, since the creation of SFA, there have been questions as to which organization is best suited to coach, teach, and mentor foreign security forces (FSF). In the past, Special Operations Forces (SOF) conducting foreign internal defense (FID) were the primary force of choice to accomplish this mission set. Recently this paradigm has shifted. Conventional forces have been reorganized and augmented, allowing them to take the lead role in training both Iraqi and Afghan security forces.³

Taking into account these operations, the Army as a whole is focusing more than ever on training FSF. Yet the controversy remains, what is the appropriate Army organization to support SFA? Is it SOF, who has historically done FID in the past, or is it the modular Brigade Combat Team – Stability (BCT-S) units which were developed out of necessity during recent combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This project will begin by identifying the strategic connection between national policy and SFA; and next, analyze the inherent advantages and disadvantages of both SOF and the BCT-S as possible advisory organizations; and finally, determine the unit

with the appropriate capabilities and capacity required to conduct future SFA operations and attain the national end state.

Three caveats apply for this project. First, only U.S. Army organizations are considered during the analysis portion of this paper. Second, the term SOF refers directly to Army Special Forces (SF) units. Of the five U.S. Special Operations Command (USASOC) units, SF is assigned the majority, if not all, of the SFA mission sets. SOF is used because most strategic policies and documents do not differentiate between SOF and SF. Finally, this project focuses solely on the military aspect of training, advising, and assisting FSF.

Background

The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) directs U.S. Armed Forces to train and operate with foreign militaries of ally and partner nations in an effort to improve both their capability and capacity. It clearly states conducting SFA is a high-priority mission and is increasingly a critical element in building partnership capability.⁴

So what is security force assistance (SFA)? The Department of Defense (DOD) defines SFA as a “department activity that contributes to unified action by the U.S. government to support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions.”⁵ The Department of the Army (DOA) defines SFA as the “unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority.”⁶ Both definitions agree that SFA is intended to be a U.S. strategic level ‘ways’ to develop an enduring host nation capability designed to “establish and maintain security, support legitimate governance, and unilaterally manage internal conflicts.”⁷

Conducting SFA serves two purposes. First, well trained FSF can engage terrorists, violent extremist organizations, and insurgents operating in ungoverned areas within their borders or region. Second, it builds capacity in allies and partners to be used as the main effort to achieve U.S. national objectives instead of using U.S. forces, who might not understand the local language and culture. In short, SFA is the key to effectively shaping the future security environment of the twenty-first century.⁸

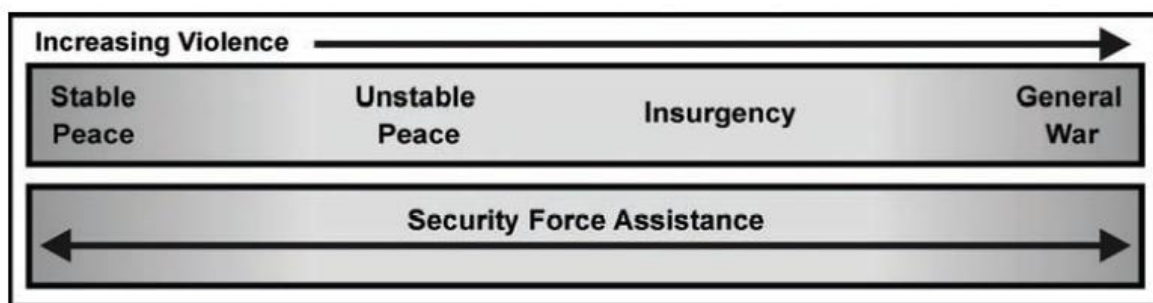


Figure 1. The spectrum of conflict and security force assistance⁹

SFA occurs within the framework of full spectrum operations, allowing partner nations to defend against external threats, combat internal threats, or serve as coalition peacekeepers that improve regional security. SFA can span many types of military operations to include overseas contingency operations, conventional operations, irregular warfare operations, stability operations, security cooperation, and security assistance. In general terms, SFA supports the development of FSF so as to meet U.S. national security objectives.¹⁰

DOD has assigned the responsibility of joint proponent for SFA to the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). This command serves as the lead for the development of joint doctrine, training, and education relevant to SFA activities from the individual to the service level. USSOCOM recommends the most appropriate

forces for meeting SFA requirements listed in the Geographic Combatant Commanders' (GCC) theater campaign plans (TCPs).¹¹

In both civilian and military communities, SFA and foreign internal defense (FID) have been used synonymously and interchangeably. However, SFA is not FID. Foreign internal defense (FID) is defined as the "participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency".¹² FID is not solely a military activity, but rather incorporates all the instruments of national power in support of the U.S. Internal Development and Defense (IDAD) strategy.

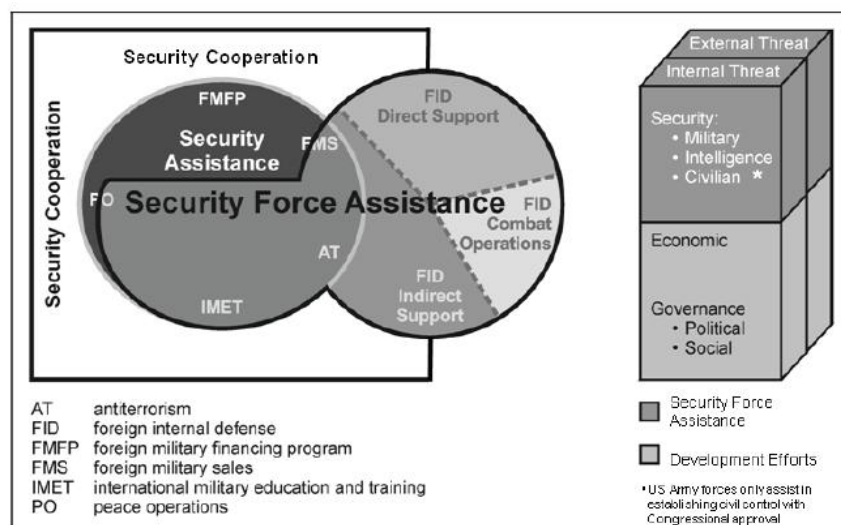


Figure 2. Relationship of security force assistance, security cooperation, security assistance, and foreign internal defense¹³

SFA is not limited to the military but rather it is considered a 'whole of government' activity. This includes a coordinated effort across the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) community.¹⁴

In conjunction with these relationships, numerous government strategic documents emphasize the need to increase our ability to provide SFA to our allies and partners in an effort to further the U.S.'s objective of "securing a peaceful and cooperative international order."¹⁵ Policy documents such as the National Security Strategy (NSS), National Defense Strategy (NDS), National Military Strategy (NMS), QDR, and DOD Instruction 5000.68 all direct the need to increase capability and capacity of host nation FSF. These key strategy documents continue to assert that SFA is the primary tool for building partnership capacity within partner nations and furthering U.S. national interest abroad.¹⁶ Below are salient excerpts from the documents which support the requirements for SFA:

- 2010 NSS. "To invest in the capacity of strong and capable partners . . . we will undertake long-term, sustained efforts to strengthen the capacity of security forces to guarantee internal security, defend against external threats, and promote regional security."¹⁷
- 2008 NDS. "[o]ur strategy emphasizes building the capacities of broad spectrum of partners as the basis for long-term security . . . [w]e will support, train, advise and equip partner security forces to counter insurgencies, terrorism, proliferation, and other threats."¹⁸
- 2004 NMS. "Enabling multinational partners through security cooperation and other engagement activities enhances the ability to prevent conflict and deter aggression . . . increase the capabilities of partners to protect common security interests . . . [s]trengthening regional alliances and coalitions helps to create favorable regional balances of power that help bring pressure to bear on hostile or uncooperative regimes."¹⁹
- 2010 QDR. "Efforts to assist foreign security forces in building competency and capacity . . . U.S. forces will continue to treat the building of partners' security capacity as an increasingly important mission . . . SFA activities can help enable host country participation in coalition stability operations and peacekeeping operations to improve regional security."²⁰
- DODI 5000.68. "This document establishes policy and assigns responsibilities for SFA across DOD, including preparation of personnel, operational planning, and its conduct . . . SFA is an overarching policy approach to building the capacity of partner states and is intended to

enable all agencies and organizations involved in security capability and capacity development to coordinate, synchronize, and integrate all their foreign security force developmental activities to avoid gaps and to increase efficiency and effectiveness.”²¹

Figure 3 depicts how SFA is fully integrated into national strategy as it relates to the ends, ways, and means to achieve U.S. national objectives.

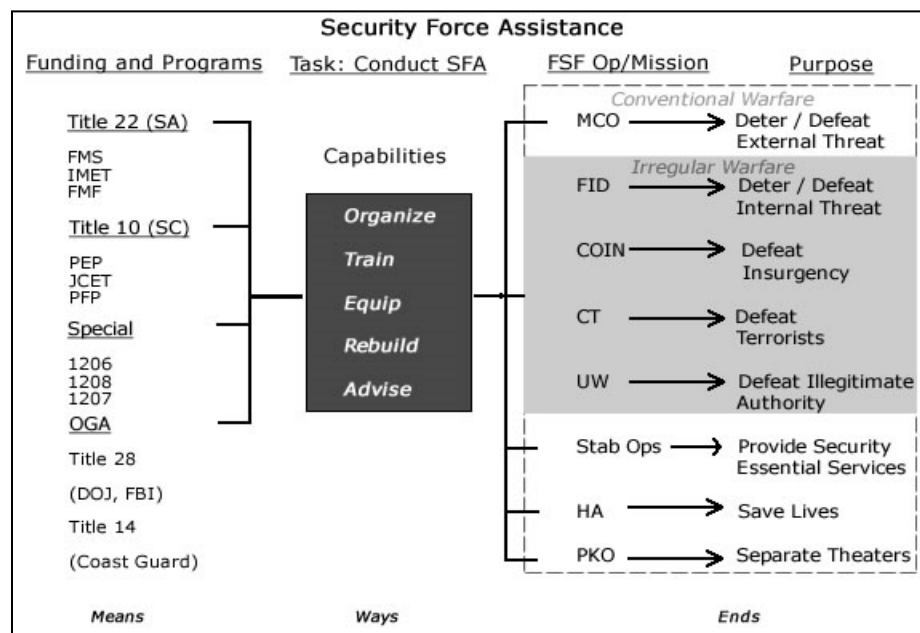


Figure 3. Security Force Assistance (SFA) in relation to Ends, Ways, and Means²²

Besides being woven in national strategic policies, SFA is also ingrained throughout the U.S. counterterrorism strategy. In 2010, the former Secretary of Defense stated:

Arguably, the most important military component in the War on Terror is not the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we enable and empower our partners to defend and govern their own countries.²³

U.S. policy on counterterrorism directs activities to strengthen the security institutions of partner nations in an effort to target violent extremist organizations worldwide and create conditions inhospitable to support their operations.²⁴ SFA is directly linked to this counterterrorism strategy by enabling allies to conduct effective

operations against terrorist organizations and at the same time shape and stabilize their environments to erode the terrorist's support and degrade their ability to acquire safe haven.²⁵ The Army is increasingly focused on SFA to develop the capacity of friendly security forces to give partner countries capabilities to deter and prevent terrorist activities and sanctuary.²⁶ There is no substitute for professional, motivated indigenous security forces protecting the population threatened by violent extremist and terrorist organizations within their own borders.²⁷

In the previous sections, SFA has been clearly defined and then shown how it is incorporated into current U.S. strategy as a high priority mission. It is fitting at this point to recognize the Army has been involved with training and advising indigenous forces for most of America's military history. Recent operations in the Middle East are not the first time in our nation's history the Army has been called to employ SFA skill sets. The Army has over one hundred years of experience training, assisting, and advising host nation security forces.²⁸ Examples include:

- Long term mentorship of the Philippine Scouts to combat an insurgency during the 1899 Philippine Insurrection.²⁹
- Training eight divisions of Free French forces and over 30 divisions of Nationalist Chinese troops to combat Axis forces during World War II.³⁰
- Shortly after the end of World War II the Army also advised the national security forces of South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Greece and Turkey to help stabilize their fragile governments.³¹
- With less than 300 Army advisors, the rather small Korean Military Advisory and Assistance Group (KMAAG) successfully reorganized over 20 divisions of the

Republic of Korea Army into an effective combat force before and during the Korean War.³²

- The numerous training and advising missions in Vietnam included over 14,000 advisors at the peak of the conflict. This effort was initiated with their Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program, later this element was assimilated into the largest advisory organization of its time the Military Assistance Command – Vietnam (MACV), and ended with the creation of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support organizations called CORDS.³³
- Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. military assistance mission in Latin America included support to both El Salvador Armed Forces and to Columbia to combat insurgencies in their respectful countries.³⁴
- The U.S. also conducted another large advisory effort in the Middle East, working with coalition forces during the first Iraq war in 1991 and then later following 9/11 as part of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), working with several different FSF both in Iraq and Afghanistan in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), and NEW DAWN (OND).³⁵

From the Philippine Insurrection to the recent operations in the Middle East, the Army has a long history of employing military advisors and developing capabilities of FSF. Unfortunately, the Army has never captured this experience and institutionalized it into its doctrine, training methods, or unit organization structure.³⁶

It is clear from an analysis of current U.S. strategy that SFA is a vital task needed to maintain alliances and partnerships against asymmetrical threats of this century. It is time for the Army to assign the SFA mission set to a specific organization to ensure

recent knowledge, techniques, and procedures are standardized and not lost between conflicts. The question is then asked: which Army organization? Should it be the traditional advisors of SOF or the conventional yet versatile BCT? The following sections will analyze each of these structures, offering both advantages and disadvantages that will be used to synthesize a feasible recommendation.

Main Point 1: SOF

After the Vietnam War, the responsibility for conducting training and advising tasks belonged almost exclusively to the SOF community. Historically, SOF were the only units to provide regionally oriented Soldiers with language and cultural skills capable of executing foreign internal defense (FID), host nation Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) programs, and training of indigenous forces.³⁷

SFA has been and is still a critical task for SOF formations and its importance is stressed throughout the chain of command. On March 4, 2010, then USSOCOM Commanding General Admiral Eric Olson, emphasized the importance of SFA in his annual posture statement to the Senate Armed Service:

Security force assistance remains a highlight of USSOF indirect action and is a collaboration engine for the entire Command. SFA enhances the military capabilities and capacities of our allies and partners via training, advising, assistance, and supporting foreign military and security forces. We recognize that it is high-quality, low-profile, long-term engagement that fosters trust and enables essential partnerships. In this regard, we should measure success by how well we have prepared others to face their security challenges, not by what we do for them.³⁸

SOF personnel receive extensive training to advise FSF and as such are currently the most qualified to do so. These personnel are selected, trained, and provided with career long experience in advisor operations during the conduct of their assigned core tasks. Building advanced advisory skills is a long term process that starts

with accessing the personnel with the right aptitude; providing them with education and training not only in tactical skills but also in language and cultural awareness; assigning them to experienced teams that provide mentorship; and then executing lengthy deployments into operational environments where they continue to employ and refine their advisory abilities.³⁹ Many senior civilian and military leaders will agree that SOF is the force of choice to conduct SFA operations because of these abilities.

FM 3-05 *Army Special Operations Forces* lists these SOF capabilities and characteristics that are appropriate to the SFA mission set:

- SOF personnel undergo careful selection processes or mission-specific training beyond basic military skills to achieve entry-level SO skills.
- Mature, experienced personnel make up SOF. Many maintain a high level of competency in more than one military specialty.
- SOF are ideally suited to perform operations by, with, or through foreign security forces and populations.
- Most SOF are regionally oriented for employment. Cross-cultural communication skills are a routine part of their training. SOF will have a detailed knowledge of the cultural nuances and languages of a country or region where employed.
- SOF conduct specific tactical operations by small units with unique talents to accomplish operational or strategic aims and objectives.
- SOF can be task organized quickly and deployed rapidly to provide tailored responses to many different situations.
- SOF can deploy at relatively low cost, with a low profile less intrusive than that of larger conventional forces.
- SOF units often conduct operations at great distance from operational bases. These units employ a sophisticated communications system and means of insertion, support, and extraction to penetrate and return from hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas.
- SOF can gain access to hostile and denied areas and can provide limited security and medical support for themselves. SOF can live in austere, harsh environments without extensive support.⁴⁰

SOF also have unique capabilities to support SFA missions which call for an advisory force to: train FSF while interacting closely with the local population; operate in an extremely sensitive political situation with the understanding that SOF actions can have strategic level implications; and configure to leave behind a small footprint, not just in numbers of advisors, but also in command and control, logistical support, and other mission support areas.⁴¹

In some cases the nature of the training will dictate that SOF units are the more appropriate organization. If the FSF require training on specialized skills that SOF possesses, for example advanced operations in urban terrain, close quarters combat, special reconnaissance, or advanced marksmanship, it logically dictates that SOF provide the training for this mission; in other words like forces training like forces.⁴²

SOF teams often train and advise as part of an operation or in support of a GCC theater security cooperation exercise. Executing these events in foreign nations provides SOF the opportunity to build relationships with partnered FSF, realistic training venue, language and cultural immersion, and offers SOF the chance to conduct preparation of the environment (PE) in locations targeted for future missions.⁴³ These training engagements with FSF elements are also an effective, low cost means of promoting the respect for human rights and democratic values.⁴⁴

It is important to note that SOF remains continually engaged around the world in SFA activities. All SOF operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are partnered operations, and the bulk of SOF units not deployed continue to conduct engagement operations in every GCC area of responsibility (AOR). In 2010, as an example, in addition to ongoing

combat operations, the number of FSF organizations trained and advised by SOF equaled to well over 200 units in more than 60 countries.⁴⁵

When compared to general purpose forces (GPF), SOF have many advantages when it comes to conducting SFA, but they do have some noticeable disadvantages as well. The next section will examine these areas in an effort to solidify a practical recommendation to which Army organization is best suited for the SFA mission set.

Advantages of SOF

First and foremost, SOF is a full spectrum organization capable of conducting SFA across the entire spectrum of conflict. This gives SOF the ability to be involved in all six phases⁴⁶ of a named operation and the flexibility to switch expeditiously from one mission set to the next.

SOF operators are uniquely appropriate to conduct SFA for several reasons. As stated earlier, these Soldiers are multi-dimensional, extensively trained, diplomatically astute, well led, flexible, and adaptable. SOF have rigorous selection standards and years of training which provides them with a high level of proficiency in skill sets such as weapons, engineering, communications, medical, and intelligence, as well as being educated in a foreign language. In addition to expert proficiency in their specialized skills, SOF operators are trained to have a regional area of expertise. These Soldiers may spend the majority of their professional careers in the same geographic theater. SOF excel at SFA because they focus their education and training efforts on the countries in which they operate. SOF personnel learn about the customs, speak the language, and participate in a host nation's cultural functions to build and maintain rapport. SOF Soldiers are the only individuals in the Army capable of advising and

training in austere and harsh environments with little to no combat service support infrastructure.⁴⁷

SOF units are the only elements organized, trained, and equipped to conduct operations independent of other capabilities and in high risk situations that require the smallest footprint possible. Due to their distinctive abilities, SOF elements quickly and often adjust to meet the needs of the host country. While conducting SFA, SOF provides continuity with their FSF counterparts through long standing relationships between units and individuals.⁴⁸ SOF, which have been used as a model for advising, does not train SOF operators how to be advisors; instead they are trained to be adaptive, and that's what makes them excellent advisors.⁴⁹

SFA missions conducted by SOF are likely to be more complex and specialized, reflecting capabilities that far exceed the abilities of GPF units. Currently, there are no other Army organizations capable of conducting SFA under these conditions and within these constraints; in short SOF is ideally suited to support SFA.⁵⁰

For example, some noteworthy recent SFA missions by SOF include the training of the counterterrorism forces in Yemen; development of indigenous SOF forces in Iraq and Afghanistan; training of the Frontier Corps in Pakistan; training of forces in Mali against the illicit trafficking of weapons, drugs, and people; and training of armed forces of the Philippines to counter Muslim insurgent groups in Mindanao.⁵¹

Disadvantages of SOF

The capacity required to meet the global demand for training FSF has grown significantly. With all of the advantages listed above, SOF does have disadvantages, with the primary ones being their extremely high Operational Tempo (OPTEMPO) and their small operational size limiting their capacity to train numerous FSF units at one

time. SOF is stretched thin in order to support current overseas contingency operation requirements and their inability to fulfill TCP requirements outside the U.S. Central Command AOR. In other words, SOF's current OPTEMPO is unsustainable.⁵²

The high demand for SOF units to conduct ongoing partnered combat operations and simultaneously contribute forces to TCP events has overtaxed the force. Prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (a.k.a. 9/11), SOF units were the force of choice to support GCC TCP training events in numerous foreign countries. SOF's core task of FID made them the ideal force to conduct these engagement operations often resulting in positive outcomes for both the host nation as well as the GCC. The true problems with this paradigm began to be identified after 9/11 and the beginning of combat operations. There were not enough SOF units available to do both missions, and even with the addition of five Special Forces battalions and U.S. Marine Special Operation (MARSOC) units, these requirements began to stress the human fabric of the SOF community.

The SFA mission sets in Iraq and Afghanistan far exceeded SOF's capacity to conduct all the advisory and training requirements even with the addition of new formations. The breadth of the advisory mission in these locations is an excellent example why SOF cannot meet all the SFA taskings alone and justifies the use of GPF to accomplish these mission requirements in these operations.⁵³

A common perception is when the size of a SFA operation is small, it is appropriate for SOF to execute the mission, but when the operation increases in size beyond the capacity of SOF to support, it becomes appropriate for conventional forces

to execute. This perception was clearly presented in a *Military Review* article by then Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli in which he wrote:

The Special Forces develop other countries' indigenous security forces (ISF) well on the scale that is normally required for theater security cooperation and other routine foreign internal defense missions . . . [w]e should ensure our conventional forces have the inherent flexibility to transition to indigenous security forces support when the mission becomes too large for the Special Forces.⁵⁴

USSOCOM also has concern over its ability to sufficiently resource SFA missions. Even with the recent growth, the demands have quickly exceeded its capacity. SOF with their enhanced skills and unique capability to conduct SFA are a "low-density/high-demand" asset. These specialized forces are in high demand but due to limited numbers there are not enough of them to accomplish all the SFA requirements. The Senate and House Armed Services Committees have determined that the demand for such forces and their unique skills will continue to outpace supply for the foreseeable future.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, the growing national requirement for SFA missions cannot be met using only SOF forces.

Prior to the war in Iraq, SFA was viewed primarily as a SOF mission. A key event changed this paradigm: the immense task of organizing the new Iraqi security forces, which was well beyond the capacity of SOF. With SOF stretched thin, some of these SFA missions sets were tasked to GPF and without a doubt conventional forces are capable of conducting these traditional train, advise, and assist missions.⁵⁶ This is why GPF are assuming responsibility for more and more SFA activities.

The question then is asked, could conventional BCTs and their subordinate units conduct SFA in foreign countries in support of combat operations and GCC

engagement plans in order to increase the capacity and capabilities of FSF? This deserves serious examination.

Main Point 2: BCT-S

Conventional forces have been in the SFA business for a long time, especially in the technical training field of security assistance. There is even historical precedence of large GPF advisory missions; for example there were nearly 10,000 conventional Army advisors in South Vietnam in 1964.⁵⁷ Following the deactivation of the last of the Vietnam mobile advisory teams in 1972, the Army discarded preparing conventional forces to advise FSF and the mission fell entirely to the SOF.⁵⁸ As seen previously, our current strategic documents seek to increase GPF participation in the training and advising of FSF, in line with our current doctrine.⁵⁹ This emerging concept was echoed by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates during his speech to the 2007 AUSA convention, “The standing up and mentoring of indigenous armies and police—once the province of Special Forces—is now a key mission for the military as a whole.”⁶⁰

Recent wars have resulted in a change in the responsibility of conducting SFA. In October 2007, SFA has been identified as one of four primary activities for which the Army is responsible. Then Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) George Casey highlighted this responsibility in early 2010 testimony before the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, where he stated:

[T]he Army must engage to help other nations build capacity and to assure our friends and allies. Through security force assistance, we can increase the capacity of other nations’ military and police to uphold the rule of law, ensure domestic order, and deny sanctuary to terrorists, thereby helping avoid future conflicts that might otherwise develop.⁶¹

In this same testimony, the CSA anticipated there would be a continual requirement for SFA-tasked brigades to carry the role of building partner capacity beyond the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During these conflicts, the Army was forced to find a way to build and train national FSF on a large scale to counter an emerging insurgency and violent extremist organizations. The Army leveraged the modular force and utilized the BCT as the base platform for SFA efforts in Iraq, and to a lesser extent, Afghanistan. Department of the Army Field Manual 3-07.1 *Security Force Assistance* states that “The BCT is the cornerstone for Army modularity and can be augmented, based on requirements of the operational environment, with enabling assets and capabilities to support distributed security force assistance.”⁶² In addition, the modular BCT can be mission tailored to meet the needs of the combatant commander and are designed to operate at the tactical level across the full spectrum of conflict.

The modular BCT design is seven years old and has demonstrated its success in two wars and virtually all forms of combat operations. COL Philip Battaglia, a former commander of the 4th Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division, states in a 2010 *Military Review* article that in his experience the BCT is an “agile, flexible organization that provides a diverse toolbox of complementary skills, weapons, and organizations that a commander can use and adapt to specific missions.”⁶³ The modular BCT is the right organization to conduct SFA operations. When augmented with senior level advisors, this organization has the ability to conduct SFA activities for indigenous forces while maintaining security and logistically sustainment operations in a non-permissive environment.⁶⁴ Directing BCTs to modify both organizationally and conceptually to focus

on partnered FSF is a logical progression for the modular force as the environment and mission in the twenty first century has changed.⁶⁵

The environment and mission certainly evolved in Iraq and Afghanistan as the Army faced the need to provide SFA to host nation security forces which were standing up on a large scale. In 2006 the Army conducted several months of detailed planning on how to organize and equip conventional forces which could carry out SFA missions and maintain the ability to conduct full spectrum operations against emerging threats.⁶⁶ The BCT-S was born out of the challenges of building and fielding advisor teams for these brigade teams. This new formation is task organized, trained, and equipped for the SFA mission through the cyclical process of force generation.⁶⁷ Internally, personnel are organized from within the brigade into the size and skill sets required for providing SFA. Each BCT-S has over 250 commissioned officers and over 1,000 NCOs of sergeant rank and above, providing a large manning pool that can be utilized as trainers or advisors.⁶⁸ Externally, the BCT-S is augmented and tailored with additional senior level advisors including fire support, engineers, military police, logistics, communication, and civil affairs personnel to enable it to focus on SFA and stability operations.⁶⁹

The standard augmentation package that creates a BCT-S consists of the increased number of 48 field grade advisors who attend cultural, language and advisor training, and are assigned to unit during pre-deployment preparations.⁷⁰ These field grade officers lead the stability-transition team (S-TT), ranging in size from eleven to sixteen individuals comprised of up to six functional area specialists listed above and twelve enlisted driver/security personnel. The primary mission of transition teams is to advise in the areas of personal administration, intelligence, operations, planning, fire

support, logistics, and communications, while also coordinating for U.S. enabler support such as air and ground fire support, intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), and communications. Depending on the BCT-S's area of operation and the type of partner force unit, these teams could advise at battalion, brigade, or division level.

Standard functions of the S-TT include:

- Advising, training, and assisting the foreign security force (FSF) to which it is assigned.
- Increasing capability, capacity, competency, confidence, and commitment of the FSF by providing advice and support during battalion level and higher operations.
- Assessing partner leaders, staff, and certain shortfalls.
- Conducting sustainment training with FSF at their home-station or on operations.
- Reporting on conditions in the operational environment.⁷¹

The conventional force BCT-S augmented with its transition teams represents a full spectrum capable force that arrives in theater with the capability to provide constructive SFA to a variety of host nation security force units.⁷²

In 2004 the advisory effort for the GPF started with small, ad hoc transition teams pulled together from both the active and reserve components. Formal advisory training came later when the Army established the transition team (TT) training mission, first at Fort Hood, Texas, then at Fort Riley, Kansas.⁷³ This training has since been modified to be delivered solely by the 162nd Brigade at Fort Polk, Louisiana. This unit trains BCT-Ss and their transition teams on recent SFA tactics, techniques, and procedures captured from recent combat deployments. Additionally, the Army has established the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Culture Center at Fort Huachuca, Arizona,

and a SFA Proponency Office at the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to further institutionalize its ability to convey SFA knowledge.⁷⁴

When compared to SOF's unique skills and long history of advisor operations, conventional forces have many disadvantages when it comes to conducting SFA, but they do have some visible advantages as well. The next sections will examine these areas in an effort to solidify a practical recommendation to which Army organization is best suited for the SFA mission set.

Advantages of BCT-S

Like SOF, the BCT-S is a full spectrum organization capable of conducting SFA across the entire spectrum of conflict. This gives BCT-S the ability to be involved in all six phases of a named operation and the flexibility to switch expeditiously from one mission set to the next. Unlike SOF, when operations require a large scale SFA effort, the BCT-S has personnel and resources fully capable of accomplishing this mission set.

The Army maintains the BCT can meet the requirements to train, advise, assist, and partner with FSF and reiterates this point in its doctrine. FM 3-0 states that Army forces are capable of full spectrum operations. In other words, the BCT must be able to function across any number of operational themes, which include major combat operations, limited intervention, peacetime military engagement, irregular warfare, peace operations, and stability operations. Of note, SFA is a key component of the latter three types of operations, so there is a mission match.⁷⁵ The BCT-S concept provides several key advantages. It:

- Maintains unit cohesion and achieves unity of command and unity of effort.
- Provides advisors with organic security, communications, and sustainment.

- Retains ability to provide combat support and combat service support to its advisors.
- Is tailored to conduct advisor operations from company to division level.
- Provides the ability to reconfigure and conduct full spectrum operations if the need arises.⁷⁶

In the case of unity of command and unity of effort the BCT-S is optimum because the operational environment owner (OEO) has to be in charge of the advisory process. MG Dana J. H. Pittard, Commander of 1st Armored Division and former G3/5/7 for Training and Doctrine Command, states there is a clear linkage between the development of the FSF, the actions of the transition teams in the field, the overall security condition of the area of operation, crisis management from lethal operations, and the civil-military relationship with the local governance and populace.⁷⁷

The BCT-S is self contained and does not require external resources to execute an advisory operation. The brigade staff can be task organized to form a senior level transition team to include the brigade commander, operations officer, intelligence officer, and others.⁷⁸ This unit has squads and platoons readily available to provide security for advisor teams, allowing the advisors to operate in smaller elements and distributed across a large FSF organization. The BCT-S can also provide quick reaction forces (QRFs), secure forward operating bases needed for sustainment operations, provide a substantial quantity of logistical support, as well as vital enablers⁷⁹ that are either organic to its organization or provide access to enablers⁸⁰ at higher echelons.⁸¹

Due to its full spectrum nature, the BCT-S possesses the ability to rapidly transition between various configurations of offense, defense, and stability operations. A

combat environment is a lethal one that can constantly and suddenly shift causing units to transition to meet the emerging situation. In extreme circumstances, the BCT-S can reconfigure and provide combat power to assist the FSF if a situation moves from SFA to lethal combat operations.⁸²

Instead of designing exactly the right unit for every situation, the versatility of modular BCT can be tailored for any assigned mission. According to the Army's Center for Lessons Learned, units returning from combat deployments indicate that the BCT is a viable basis for large-scale SFA operations.⁸³ Army Field Manual (FM) 3-07.1 *Security Force Assistance*, asserts BCTs can operate in permissive and non-permissive environments and can rapidly shift its emphasis to more lethal operations if necessary while retaining flexibility to perform other missions. It goes on to explain forces capable of full spectrum operations will meet current as well as future Army requirements.⁸⁴

Army senior leaders insist full spectrum units can meet the operational challenges of counterinsurgency, stabilization, and SFA. They maintain while in combat, BCT-S have been required to rapidly transition between SFA and lethal operations on a frequent and unpredictable basis. Since there is not an obvious transition from one type of operation to another, it would become both difficult and risky to replace a BCT-S with a specialized advisory unit, particularly when the tactical situation could rapidly and unexpectedly deteriorate into open conflict.⁸⁵

Disadvantages of BCT-S

Some analysts do not agree with the strategy of leveraging BCTs to fulfill the training and advising role.⁸⁶ Despite a long history of advising foreign forces, the conventional Army found itself initially unprepared to assume its SFA responsibilities in Afghanistan and Iraq. BCTs possess a limited number of trained and ready advisors, no

organizational structure, nor any prepared doctrine to provide Soldiers assigned to these advisor duties.⁸⁷ In 2004, the initial difficulties training Iraq's security forces was proof that the conventional Army was ill-suited for SFA.⁸⁸

The BCT-S is not fully manned to coach, teach, or mentor indigenous security forces. Though this unit may have some organic advisory assets, it must introduce the majority of this capacity to its formation in order to accomplish a SFA mission set. Numerous problems have plagued the S-TT program from its inception. There are two central issues to this problem: the first being the quality of personnel selected to serve on S-TTs; and the second is the development and training of these advisor teams.

These S-TTs are being severely hampered by the quality and diversity of individuals assigned to serve in these key advisor positions. These teams are ad hoc in nature organized from Guard, Reserve, and Active Component personnel serving in various institutional assignments, many of whom who do not have prior combat experience. It is evident the Army has not selected experienced officers and NCOs to serve as advisors even though SFA has been characterized as a priority mission. Even the teams' size and composition are inconsistent. The teams are too small for the tasks that they have been assigned and many of the S-TTs consequently have had to be augmented in theater with additional personnel, again on an ad hoc basis.⁸⁹

The second issue concerns the training of the S-TTs. A 2007 joint study conducted by the Army G3 Directorate and Training and Doctrine Command reported the training of these S-TTs was lacking due to "the inadequacy of the curriculum, the lack of trained and experienced senior advisor cadre, and overall lack of external support."⁹⁰ Additionally, the sixty days of training that was conducted focused primarily

toward individual and collective combat skills centered on force protection activities rather than advising an indigenous security force. Only a rudimentary amount of language and culture training was provided and even less training on how to train, advise, train, and assist FSF units.⁹¹

Along with the issues listed above there were additional problems with the S-TT concept. While preparing for deployment, BCT-S often received late assignments of their S-TT's field grade officers; most of these senior advisors did not participate in the brigade's pre-mission training program.⁹² Most S-TTs did not know their assigned FSF until they were in country, thus there was no prior training conducted on the unique abilities or limitations of their indigenous counterparts. After deployment, some of these trained advisor teams were broken up and dispersed to fill other advisor vacancies within the theater.⁹³ At times, due to several FSFs within an assigned sector, a BCT-S might employ one S-TT to advise two or more FSF headquarters, overtaxing an already weak organization.⁹⁴ Additionally, due to its limited size and force protection requirements, the S-TT was limited in its ability to perform more than one advisory task at a time because the team had to travel everywhere as a unit and had no organic security forces assigned.⁹⁵ Based upon past operational experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan and recent collected lessons learned, it is clear that S-TT model is not a viable solution for the execution of SFA.

When it comes to advising capabilities, conventional forces are not nearly as proficient as SOF. BCT-S trainers and advisors by themselves are not a standalone capability. These Soldiers must rely on the security and combat service support of a brigade. In many cases, conventional trainers and advisors will not meet the

requirements to train foreign armies in the most technical skills, such as gathering intelligence, building target packets, conducting precision raids, developing maintenance programs, or establish a tactical computer system. Some skills require specific experience that most conventional advisors and trainers will never possess.⁹⁶

The BCT-S is currently not regionally oriented, so its personnel do not receive comprehensive training in a targeted language or garner the experience to gain cultural astuteness that is routinely found in SOF operators. Most conventional advisor teams do not have the advance and diverse skill sets seen in SOF formations, nor are they equipped with sophisticated weapons, munitions, medical sets, or communication platforms allowing for precision operations. Finally, conventional force advisors are not trained to operate in austere or denied environments for prolonged periods of time. These advisors are heavily dependent on the BCT-S for force protection, voice and data communications, medical support, and the vast combat service support architecture that is organic to the brigade.⁹⁷

The caliber and quality of personnel assigned to a BCT-S are also a considerable disadvantage when compared to a SOF organization. Not just any Soldier can be an advisor and the possibility exists that many of the personnel who appear to be the best candidates for advisory duties may already be serving in the SOF.⁹⁸ The organic rank structure of a BCT-S does not support the level of competency required for SFA. Most officers in a brigade are junior lieutenants, who usually have very limited experience as a Soldier, much less as a leader. These junior officers do not have the training or experience to properly advise a battalion or brigade level staff concerning intelligence, command and control, operations, or logistics, thus providing little value to a foreign

military unit. When a BCT-S reconfigures for a SFA operation, another problem arises on what to do with the “left-over lower ranking enlisted Soldiers of a BCT-S that are not being utilized as advisors;” a question that remains unanswered to date.⁹⁹

Historically, SOF were the only units able to provide regionally oriented Soldiers with language and cultural skills capable of executing SFA. With the Army engaged in two protracted conflicts this paradigm has shifted where modular BCTs are now deployed forward with embedded advisory teams conducting SFA with large formations of indigenous security forces.¹⁰⁰ Based on directives in our national strategy documents and the assessment of the future security environment contained in those same documents, it is evident that SFA will be a sustained requirement for the Army. Both organizations analyzed above have their pros and cons when it comes to conducting SFA. The next section will harness the data collected to propose a feasible solution to this enduring and multifaceted mission set.

Recommendation

A 2007 study by the Institute for Defense Analyses concluded the U.S. military will have an enduring requirement for 5,000 advisors to coach, teach, and mentor partner nation forces.¹⁰¹ The units that advise these FSF must be capable of full spectrum operations to perform their training mission effectively and be ready to shift to combat operations should the operational environment unexpectedly change.¹⁰² The evaluation above concluded that both SOF and BCT-S meet this full spectrum force requirement.

As seen throughout this project, SFA is a task that both SOF and conventional forces must be capable of conducting. A feasible answer to the thesis question is that the Army’s appropriate organization to conduct SFA is a combination of these two full

spectrum forces: SOF and the modular BCT-S. This is in keeping with the recently published Army Field Manual (FM) 3-07.1 *Security Force Assistance*, which states “Rarely will U.S. forces conducting SFA be homogenous in terms of conventional or special operations forces, but rather contain both.”¹⁰³

What the Army needs to establish is a process to determine what missions are appropriate for each force.¹⁰⁴ Rather than expending efforts looking at what SFA tasks SOF should give to conventional forces, the Army should invest the effort and resources to better understand all aspects of SFA; to train SOF and the BCT-Ss on their strengths and roles in SFA; and to apply the appropriate force to the appropriate mission. This analysis should take advantage of each unit’s unique capabilities and characteristics, while complementing the other’s weaknesses. As a result the force apportionment for a SFA mission must therefore be the result of thoughtful analysis and deliberate decision making; in other words a prudent division of labor.¹⁰⁵ FM 3-07.1, the Army’s doctrine on SFA, advocates SOF conducting SFA side-by-side with conventional forces:

A force analysis of how best to integrate conventional and SOF to accomplish SFA considers host-nation and U.S. national policies. Planners leverage skill sets among conventional and SOF trainers, advisors, mentors by integrating and coordinating conventional and SOF units with assigned tasks within SFA.¹⁰⁶

SFA mission sets within the capability of a BCT-S reflect its core competencies such as small unit tactics, basic marksmanship, tactical level planning, and combat life saver skills. SOF is the force of choice to do SFA when the conditions require skills that are unique to SOF; such as SFA efforts that require an experienced advisor force able to operate in austere conditions, trained in cross-cultural communications, and prepared to deal with political sensitivities.¹⁰⁷ This doctrine goes on to state, if the SFA task is to train a large number of FSF in a short time and exceeds the capacity of SOF, then planners

as part of their mission analysis should determine the appropriate mix of SOF and GPF to accomplish the assigned task; for example U.S. forces might deploy an augmented BCT-S supported by SOF to conduct complementary SFA tasks.¹⁰⁸

In unison with the recommendation above, another course of action is to assign SFA operations based on similar missions, capabilities, and core tasks. GCC-level planners should conduct critical analysis to identify the proper force to train and advise an 'in-kind' indigenous security force. For example, the BCT-S is best suited to train foreign forces attempting to build similar conventional combat arms capabilities or those tasks that SOF is incapable of doing for instance building institutions, advising above the brigade level, or conducting large-scale engineering or medical projects.¹⁰⁹ Alternatively, SOF units train only partner nation SOF security forces; using like forces to train like forces.¹¹⁰ To add to this point, the Commanding General of USSOCOM has expressed the importance that SOF is used primarily to train partner nations' SOF units and conventional forces should be tasked with instructing FSF in basic military skills:

I'd like to see special operations get in the business of training foreign special operations forces a little bit more, and in the business of training new recruits in a foreign country how to march in straight lines and shoot on seven-meter ranges a little bit less.¹¹¹

These recommendations would allow the Army to effectively use its forces to build partner force capabilities and capacities in a resource constraint environment and still accomplish the U.S. national end state.

Additional topics worthy of further research include: assigning geographically orientated BCT-Ss to GCCs for the purpose of expanding engagement activities within their areas of responsibilities; the establishment of a credible language and culture education program to be used during a SFA pre-mission training program; and the

development of programs for migrating SOF advisory skills into BCT-S training and exercise plans.

Conclusion

The contemporary operating environment is characterized with conflicts that will be volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). Unconventional adversaries will flourish in this environment, using violent acts to threaten the existence of democratic and sovereign nations. Senior leaders in our government and military agree the U.S. cannot be the lead nation in every crisis but rather must rely on allies and partner nations to resolve these issues and promote peace within their geographic region. Through SFA, the U.S. can enable friendly foreign militaries to handle conflicts with little to no intervention from U.S. military forces.

U.S. strategy lists “securing a peaceful and cooperative international order”¹¹² as a national objective or ‘end’ using SFA to build the capabilities and expand the capacity of FSF as the ‘way’ to achieve this strategic goal. The Army is tasked to provide the ‘means’ using its available organizations to execute SFA missions worldwide in support of combat operations and engagement activities. This mission set is enormous and cannot be accomplished by a single military formation. Through careful evaluation, this project recommends employing both convention and unconventional Army organizations to conduct SFA. Through critical thinking, military problem solving methods, and traditional troop-to-task analysis, strategic level planners will be able to identify and apportion forces to the appropriate SFA mission set. By adopting this project’s recommended concept, the Army will have the operational capability to provide GCCs with trained, responsive SFA-competent forces.

In summary, the importance of building viable FSF is critical to our national interest. SFA will be one of the high demand missions in the twenty-first century and it is clear that there will be an enduring requirement for qualified and experienced advisors. It would be advantageous to the Army to recognize this long-term requirement early on so it can take the necessary steps to fully prepare its organizations for future operations.

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⁷⁸ Escandon, *The Future Security Force Assistance*, 84-85.

⁷⁹ Army Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* (February 1, 2008), list organic Brigade Combat Team (BCT) enablers as military intelligence, artillery, signal, engineer, reconnaissance, and sustainment capabilities.

⁸⁰ Army Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* (February 1, 2008), list higher echelon enablers as lift or attack aviation, ISR platforms, cannon or rocket artillery, air defense, military police, civil affairs, psychological operations elements, and additional information system assets.

⁸¹ Department of the Army, *Operations*, C-6.

⁸² Escandon, *The Future Security Force Assistance*, 82 and 87.

⁸³ Feickert, *Does the Army Need a Full-Spectrum Force*, 16.

⁸⁴ Department of the Army, *Security Forces Assistance*, 4-1.

⁸⁵ Feickert, *Does the Army Need a Full-Spectrum Force*, 16-17.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸⁷ Power, *Security Force Assistance*, 2.

⁸⁸ Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 368-370.

⁸⁹ John A. Nagl, "Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for a Permanent Advisory Corps," *Center for a New American Security*, June 2007, 4-5.

⁹⁰ Sebastian Sprenger, "Army Eyes Changes to Iraqi Training Mission After Review Finds Flaws," *Inside the Army*, December 12, 2007, 2.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Morschauser, *The Brigade Combat Team*, 16.

⁹³ Power, *Security Force Assistance*, 3.

⁹⁴ Morschauser, *The Brigade Combat Team*, 7.

⁹⁵ Power, *Security Force Assistance*, 17-18.

⁹⁶ Escandon, *The Future Security Force Assistance*, 42.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 49-53.

⁹⁸ Thomas D. Affourtit, "Cross Cultural Psychology Language of the Mind," *The Marine Advisor Preparation for Duty Overseas*, September 2007, 1-4 and Joseph E. Escandon, *The Future Security Force Assistance: Is The Modular Brigade Combat Team The Right Organization*, Master of Military Art and Science Project (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, June 13, 2008), 61.

⁹⁹ Escandon, *The Future Security Force Assistance*, 86 and 93.

- ¹⁰⁰ Wuestner, *Building Partner Capacity*, 15.
- ¹⁰¹ Sprenger, "Army Eyes Changes," 2.
- ¹⁰² Battaglia and Taylor, "Security Force Assistance Operations," 4.
- ¹⁰³ Department of the Army, *Security Forces Assistance*, 1-9.
- ¹⁰⁴ Escandon, *The Future Security Force Assistance*, 99.
- ¹⁰⁵ John Mulbury, "ARSOF, General Purpose Forces and FID: Who Does What, Where, and When?" *Special Warfare*, January/February 2008, 20-21 and David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 193).
- ¹⁰⁶ Department of the Army, *Security Forces Assistance*, 1-10.
- ¹⁰⁷ Mulbury, "ARSOF, General Purpose Forces and FID," 18.
- ¹⁰⁸ Department of the Army, *Security Forces Assistance*, 1-9.
- ¹⁰⁹ Escandon, *The Future Security Force Assistance*, 51-52.
- ¹¹⁰ Mulbury, "ARSOF, General Purpose Forces and FID," 20-21.
- ¹¹¹ Eric T. Olson, "Directing, Supporting and Maintaining the World's Best SOF," Interview, *Special Operations Technology*, December 8, 2008 in Thomas K. Livingston, *Building the Capacity of Partner States Through Security Force Assistance* (Washington DC: U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, May 5, 2011), 33.
- ¹¹² Gates, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 26.